

Natural Resource Partnership Program continues to grow

By Diana Maxwell

THE NATURAL Resource Partnership Program began in late 2000 as a result of the ever-increasing need to bring additional fiscal and human resources to diverse natural resource field programs in the National Park Service. The program coordinator is cooperatively funded by five divisions in the Natural Resource Program Center (NRPC): Air Resources, Biological Resource Management, Geologic Resources, Natural Resource Information, and Water Resources Divisions. These divisions have numerous successful partnerships in place and program center staff members often collaborate with parks on projects, including the Geoscientists-in-the-Parks Program. The need for a formalized partnership effort evolved as park requests for technical assistance through the Natural Resource Challenge demonstrated a clear need for increased expertise in accomplishing important natural resource projects.



Members of the Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement (EASI) visited Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado, during the summer to learn about a variety of volunteer opportunities with the park. The EASI Natural Resource Laureate Program places experienced natural resource professionals in national park units to accomplish scientific work that might not otherwise be produced.

The goal of the program is to develop new and enhanced partnerships that will expand the NRPC technical support base and increase the number of natural resource projects in parks. The program has evolved in scope by forming partnerships with new organizations. This year proved to be successful for beginning new programs and for making progress with “maturing” projects.

The partnership program teamed up with the Sonoran Institute, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Rural Development Council, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Forest Service, and Partnership Architecture, LLC, to develop a website for federal employees and the public to find new research and funding opportunities. The Conservation Assistance Tools (CAT) website is a user-friendly method for searching many databases for grant information. These partners have also produced a new brochure describing the benefits of the website. The long-term

goal is to find additional funding and expertise to improve CAT so that it will be of great assistance to park managers who need financial support for natural resource management projects. In November the Sonoran Institute announced that the Red Lodge Clearing House, an organization created by the Liz Claiborne–Art Ortenberg Foundation, will take over the development and funding of this promising program. The CAT website address is www.sonoran.org/cat.

In 2002 the Natural Resource Partnership Program began a relationship with the Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement (EASI). Named the Natural Resource Laureate Program, this new program places experienced natural resource professionals in national park units to accomplish needed scientific work that might not otherwise be produced. In 2002 a pilot test of the laureate program was announced to parks, who submitted 47 requests for lau-

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reate candidates. Initial placements began in September 2003 and will continue throughout 2004. Pilot programs are running at Richmond National Battlefield Park, Biscayne National Park, Timucuan Ecological and Historic Reserve, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and San Juan Island National Historic Site. Another goal of the program is to develop a database of natural resource specialists who can assist parks as needs arise. ■

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The National Park Service holds one or more active memorandums of understanding with 11 countries: Argentina, the Bahamas, Canada, Chile, China, Gabon, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Poland, and Venezuela. One of the **most important aspects** of the agreement between the United States and Mexico is empowering **local land managers from both countries to exchange information and work together**. Because of this, scientific and technical exchange and coordination on natural resource management have increased among staff and managers of the natural protected areas.